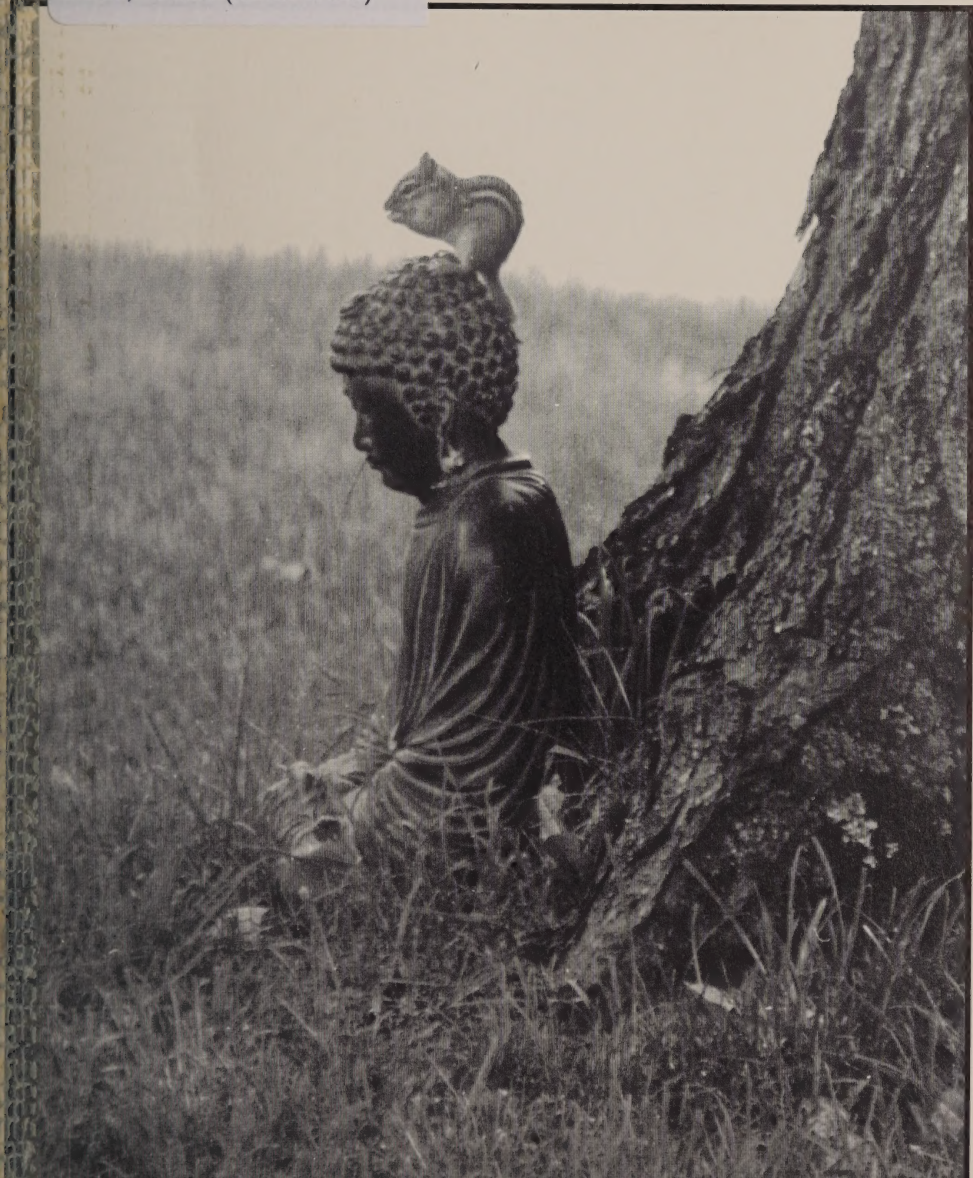


FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

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The purpose of Fellowship in Prayer is to promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice, and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

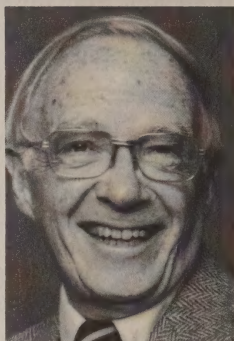
From the Articles of Incorporation, 1950.

A Message from the President	2
From the Editor	3
Insights	5
Prayer and Service: Autumn Solitude, <i>by Anne Duksa Jimenez</i>	6
Prayers: A Jewish Prayer to Love the Creator and Creation, <i>translated by David Cooper</i>	8
Worship: Seeing Deep Down into The Heart of Things, <i>by Muriel Lester</i>	10
Spirituality and Everyday Life: The Divine Dance in Our Daily Life, <i>by Sheila Morgan</i>	13
Rock Ritual XIII, <i>by Robert O'Rourke</i>	18
Spirituality and Aging: Autumn Is for Seeing, <i>by Eugene F. Connolly</i>	20
New Poetry	26
Ask Angela, <i>by Barbara Ackerman</i>	30
"A Transforming Experience": Open the Door, Please!, <i>by Evelyn Kennedy</i>	34
How to Cope With Prayer Block, <i>by Frances Sheridan Goulart</i>	36
Autobiography of a Chosen One, <i>by Robert Granat</i>	40
Books We Have Enjoyed	43
Letters to the Editor	44

Cover photograph by Leila B. Durkin.

What is the difference between religion and spirituality? What can you and I do—as individuals—to help relieve the suffering all around us?

Those questions rose frequently in my mind as I listened and talked to—leaders of many of the world's religions in Chicago last month. The Parliament of the World's Religions was awesome. Presentations and symposia explored in depth the wrenching problems of war, poverty, and ecological disaster and what the world's religions could do to work together in harmony for a better, more peaceful world.



Spirituality, on the other hand, is a matter of the inner, spiritual depths of an individual, regardless of her or his religious affiliation or beliefs. Transcending creeds and dogmas, the spiritual aspiration to love God and serve others is universal.

At one time or another, most of us have felt the divine presence—in nature, in music and art, in our spontaneous feelings of love and oneness with others, in our gratitude for the basic beauty and goodness of the world, in our compassion and urge to help the sick, the poor, the homeless.

We all have hidden within us a sacred well of love and compassion, and many of us have found that the way to draw upon that divine center is through the practice of prayer and meditation—the path of direct, unmediated communication between the individual human being and the creative source of love, light and life we commonly call God.

This action—of drawing on that of God in each of us—is crucially important, for we are all interrelated, all interconnected in the web of life, and all that we think, feel, and do ultimately affects everyone and everything everywhere.

That understanding, reverberating through the talks and meetings of the Parliament, continually affirmed Fellowship in Prayer's belief that our prayers, and the actions that flow from them, are essential to the healing of the world.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Paul Walsh".

Paul Walsh

Today most people would agree that America is verging on a new era of barbarism, a bit like the “wild and woolly West” of the nineteenth century. The violence on our streets and in our homes is so out-of-control that one feels overwhelmed and powerless just turning on the news in the morning.

What are we going to do? What can the individual do to help solve a problem so immense it threatens to engulf entire cities?

George Gallup, of Gallup Poll fame, has conducted numerous surveys through The Princeton Religion Research Center which suggest there is one way to begin to respond to this very difficult question. Not too surprisingly (to me), Gallup polls show that a key to improving the condition of our country lies in religion; more specifically in a tradition found at the heart of every religion: the practice of prayer.

Gallup studies demonstrate that the great majority of Americans believe in the power of prayer and fully 88% pray-virtually the same in 1993 as in 1953. This statistic is very surprising (and encouraging), in light of the growing secularization of society in the same years. One would expect that most people had stopped praying. What the Religion Research Center finds, however, is that while just as many people pray today as 40 years ago, they pray far less often. Data suggest that this drop-off may be due to a decline in the practice of saying grace before meals.

Perhaps the most important finding of the research is that praying helps people forgive those who hurt them. One national survey verified that in small faith communities of about eight to ten people, prayer for forgiveness had “remarkable” results in terms of healed relationships. Other studies demonstrate that people who forgive are happier. For example, researchers have discovered a solid positive relationship between “praying for a person who injured me” and “life satisfaction.” To put it another way, a spirit of forgiveness improves one’s sense of wellbeing—(just as the scriptures of all the world’s religions have always said).

Thanks to this kind of research and the well tested reliability of its results, we now “know” what we used to only “believe”: that (at the very least), prayer heals, enables forgiveness, increases happiness, and produces a feeling of greater satisfaction with one’s life. To translate that into religious language, prayer empowers women and men to appropriate grace.

This has widespread implications. What might the impact be on our society if Americans prayed as frequently as they did 40 years ago? What

could happen if more Americans prayed? Or if the practice of grace before meals were restored, and prayer before school and at bedtime? What if prayer opened our meetings? If we took "time out" during an argument for one minute of prayer? If we spent three minutes in the chapel praying each time we visited an airport or a hospital? If the people of every nation in the world did the same?

The potential blessings are incalculable.

Since religious research has verified that prayer creates more forgiving and happier people, it is crystal clear that a nation of individuals transformed by prayer would be a more forgiving and happier nation.

Let us pray!

Mary Ford-Grabowsky



Be generous and understanding. Let no one come to you without feeling better and happier when they leave. Be the living expression of God's kindness: with kindness on your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile, kindness in your warm greeting.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta

I slept and dreamt that life was joy
I woke and saw that life was service
I acted and behold! service was joy.

Tagore

Behind the differences in religion there is a hidden mystery. . . . We have to distinguish between the limited form, which is historical or cultural, and the hidden mystery, which is absolute, finally one in each tradition, beyond word and beyond thought.

Dom Bede Griffiths

Look within and seek That.

Jalaluddin Rumi

You awaken us to delight, O God, for You made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.

Augustine of Hippo

The job of the peacemaker is to stop war. To purify the world. To get it saved from poverty and riches. To heal the sick. To comfort the sad. To wake up those who have not yet found God. To create joy and beauty wherever you go. To find God in everything and everyone.

Muriel Lester

Pay attention, come to me;
listen, and your soul will live.

Is. 55.3

What things you desire when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

Mk. 11.24

Autumn Solitude

ANNE DUKSA JIMENEZ

The path of prayer and the path of service belong together and are inseparable. This writer's religious experience made her realize—as all religious experiences eventually will—that she has to share with others what she has received in prayer.

One September morning in the Sierra Nevada Mountains I sat outside on a deck facing the forest. I quieted myself for meditation by watching the wind in the trees, the thistle seeds float by, the pine needles drop, the chipmunks scurry, the falcon fly overhead, and the clouds drift by. Sensing the hidden currents operating unseen beneath all things, I had an experience of oneness with the wind, the seeds, the energy of life within all creation.

I reflected on my own emptiness as a receptacle for the divine. Silencing the rational activity of my mind, I focused on the opening in the center of my being. Descending into the deep, dark abyss of my being, I wondered how much truth or awareness I could tolerate. I once gave thanks for a glass of clear water and was hit by the image of people drinking muddy polluted water and of those with no water at all. I realized how painful the truth of human suffering can be. Being open to the inner truth of the dark can be frightening. What exists there? What will come out of it? Will I get lost there? Will I be changed?

I do not run from the dark in fear as I once did. I have learned to trust the dark as the underlying current of my life, as the place where I find the divine spirit, as my own truest nature. Years ago I began sensing a benign presence there—like a consciousness, like the light of awareness. It gave me a feeling of depth and peace and belonging. It became a place of enlightenment and affirmation. This depth within me made me aware of my connection with the Light, the Truth, the Divine. Sometimes it gets very bright . . . but only to the limits of my capacity. This day, I suddenly felt turned inside-out as if the particular ego-centered self was but

Anne Duksa Jimenez is a psychotherapist and small group facilitator who works to empower women. She also writes a column for the Catholic Women's Network.



In the Night, by Marc Chagall

a protrusion of an essential, larger Self. I realized I, along with all of creation, was a part of God—an extension of God's life.

With this awareness, the purpose of my life became the task of manifesting the Light—which appears in the dark—through my particular (unique) existence in time and space. And to help others to this happy, balancing enlightenment also. How to do this is a quest of mine. I anguish about it. I am still learning how to reach out to my suffering sisters and brothers.

A Jewish Prayer to Love the Creator and Creation

וְהָיָה אִם-שָׁמַעַתְּ שְׁמִעוּ אֶל מִצְוֹתַי אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מֵצִוֶּה אֶתְכֶם הַיּוֹם
 לְאַהֲבָה אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וּלְעֲבֹדוֹ בְּכָל לִבְבְּכֶם וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁכֶם.
 וְנָתַתִּי מִטֶּר אֲרֻצְכֶם בְּעֵתוֹ יוֹרֵה וּמִלְקוֹשׁ וְאַסְפֹּת דָּגָנְךָ וְתִירֶשֶׁךָ
 וַיְצַהֲרֶךָ. וְנָתַתִּי עֵשֶׂב בְּשׂוֹךְךָ לִבְהֵמָתְךָ וְאָכְלֹת וּשְׂבַעַת הַשָּׂמַיִם
 לָכֶם פֶּן יִפְתָּה לִבְבְּכֶם וְסָרְתֶם וְעַבַדְתֶּם אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים
 וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתֶם לָהֶם. וְתָרָה אִפִּי יְיָ בָכֶם וְעָצָר אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְלֹא יִהְיֶה
 מִטֶּר וְהָאֲדָמָה לֹא תִתֵּן אֶת יְבוּלָהּ וְאֲבֹדְתֶם מִהֵרָה מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ
 הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה נָתַן לָכֶם. וְשָׁמַתֶּם אֶת דְּבָרֵי אֱלֹהֵי עַל לִבְבְּכֶם
 וְעַל נַפְשְׁכֶם וּקְשַׁרְתֶּם אֹתָם לְאוֹת עַל יְדְכֶם וְהָיוּ לְטוֹסֹפֶת בֵּין
 עֵינֵיכֶם. וּלְמַדְתֶּם אֹתָם אֶת בְּנֵיכֶם לְדֹר וָדֹר כִּם בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ
 וּבְלִכְתְּךָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ וּבְשֹׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ. וְכָתַבְתֶּם עַל מְזוֹזוֹת בֵּיתְךָ
 וּבְשַׁעְרֶיךָ. לְמַעַן יִרְבוּ יְמֵיכֶם וַיְמֵי בְנֵיכֶם עַל הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע
 יְיָ לְאַבְרָהָם לֵאמֹר לָתֵת לָהֶם כִּימֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם עַל הָאָרֶץ.

And it will come to pass that when you listen deeply to the *mitzvot* which I direct to you this day, to love the Source of Creation and to serve the Source by loving Creation, then the rains may come in their seasons, and you will gather your food from your fields, and you will eat and enjoy.

Watch yourselves that you do not become seduced by your desire to dominate and possess, idolizing false values, turning the work of Creation against yourselves. For then, the world will no longer sustain you, and you will be lost upon the face of the earth which the Creator provided for you.

Make these words part of your understanding and spirit, bind them to witness the works of your hands, see through them as they focus the image before your eyes, teach them to your children, discuss them at home, on the road, before you sleep, and when you wake. Pass through them as they frame your places of passage. In this way you will fulfill your lives and the lives of your children here on this earth which the Creator prepared for those who came before you, for as long as the skies are above the land.

Translated from the Hebrew by David Cooper

Worship: “Seeing Deep Down into The Heart of Things”

MURIEL LESTER

Why do so many men and women in the modern world still spend an hour or hours each week in a church or synagogue or temple or mosque? For Muriel Lester, the answer is truly simple.

There is nothing more illuminating, more ennobling, than to be one of a company of people who have come together in order to free their spirit from entangling personal bonds, quiet their soul by silence, release their aspiration by music and poetry, concentrate their mind on spoken wisdom, open their heart to all that is good, true and beautiful, thus to tune themselves to God . . .

The practical effect of corporate worship is to weld varying individuals into a unity that can stand against the evil, disruptive forces of the world, its quarreling, its envying, and its war.

You cannot concentrate your mind and spirit in the worship of anything, good or bad, without acquiring something of the nature of the thing worshipped. To worship truth is to assimilate a part of truth. To worship beauty is to become in some measure beautiful. To worship courage is to begin to be brave.

Wherever worship becomes stereotyped and loses its spontaneity, a great calamity has occurred, for to worship by rote is to corrupt a holy thing to base usage . . .

What is the real meaning of this good old Anglo-Saxon word, *weorth-scipe*? *Weorth*—worth, *scipe*—ship. It is the practice of seeing deep down into the heart of things and finding their real worth, looking out for essentials, discovering the worth of people, discerning God in them.

This may mean that you suddenly see an old friend actually for the first time, because never before have you noticed the real person, never before

A close friend and co-worker of Gandhi, Muriel Lester had a long and productive career as a tireless writer and activist for peace. Her profound involvement in social issues was rooted in her Christian faith and daily worship and prayer. Her article is adapted from Ambassador of Reconciliation: a Muriel Lester Reader, edited by Richard Deats. (It has been edited for inclusive language.) The book is available through the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960-02071.

have you seen him in his relationship to God. It may mean that you recognize in a thorough-paced scoundrel, liar and shirker, a patch of goodness, native or acquired, so radiant that the memory of it inspires you ever afterwards.

There is a simple statement in the Hebrew Scriptures: "Jacob worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff." (Hebrews 11.21). As he stood at his tent-door in the twilight, gazing out into the trackless wild, as the great silver stars illumined the growing darkness, that lonely figure was the forerunner of our socialized and over-complicated programs of Divine Service in our multitudinous places of worship. Ruskin says we ask God for things as a child would ask their father for cake; we sing

Look with wonder at that which is before you.

songs of praise as a happy child might sing songs about their father, "and yet we are impudent enough to call our beggings and chantings 'Divine Service'." Are we content to leave it at that?

One August, in Cornwall, long ago, I set out with a dear companion for a thirty-three-mile tramp. The sun was not yet up, but the birds were pouring out their song, heralding its coming, in what seemed to be a passion of ecstasy. Thus welcomed, it suddenly appeared between the thick branches of friendly trees and flooded the deep, narrow, winding lane along which we were tramping; everything was very quiet.

Still, still with Thee, when purple morning breaketh
When the bird waketh, and the shadows flee;
Fairer than morning, lovelier than daylight,
Dawns the glad consciousness, I am with Thee.

As the lines came to my mind they were no longer merely part of a hymn from under a section labeled "Worship"; they interpreted reality; there was now beginning for me that which Watts-Dunton called "The Renaissance of Wonder." To use words attributed to Jesus Christ, "Who wonders shall reign; who reigns shall rest. Look with wonder at that which is before you."

We know the look on a child's face, when slowly awakening from sleep, they begin to fix a slow, wondering gaze upon objects that surround them, the look that the great Florentine masters were able to perpetuate with their brush illuminating the face of their Divine Bambino. It is to



Tom Dunham

be found, as Wordsworth knew, in the eyes of every normal child. But we grown-ups have to win back for ourselves, after adolescence, that which was our birthright as children, when wonder was natural, worship instinctive, and the world new and fresh.

Milton tries to describe in words the jocund air of the earth in its first innocence; Handel uses music for the same purpose; Michelangelo color—but not even a genius can communicate it to us until we are ready for the revelation. Our childish experiences harden into the adolescent's pride, their jealous independence of spirit, their craving for consistency, their cruel logic. This self-sufficiency lasts long enough and blinds us very effectively. But through-out the whole of this egoistic phase, if we are honest with ourselves, if we keep what Jesus Christ calls "the single eye" (Matt. 6.22), which is a certain quality of steadfastness and alertness, a necessary condition of clear vision, then, when the time is ripe, we shall get our illumination, we shall suddenly find ourselves endowed with new powers of discernment; we shall rediscover the world and our neighbor.

Our childhood's wonder had its roots in ignorant innocence and was lost in the storms of self-development. But now we have won our way through to something infinitely more precious, a childlike acceptance of the whole universe of God *as our very own*.

The Divine Dance in Our Daily Life

SHEILA MORGAN

The author wants to subtitle her book: "An ordinary woman's search for ways to touch the Divine every ordinary day."

For many years my life seemed a struggle. I didn't know quite what I was struggling for or toward. It felt like a struggle "to get there", but just where "there" was, I wasn't sure. Secretly, of course, it was a place called "happily-everafter."

Looking back I see that happily-everafter wasn't just a misguided dream perpetrated by fairy tales and MGM movies. My search was that deep longing that propels us all toward spiritual wholeness, and leads us to pursue self-transformation, until we glimpse the Divine, and know that we are home.

While a relentless drive toward wholeness remains, the struggle has been replaced by a dance. Instead of the search for a place to arrive at, the enterprise is to learn to dance, with some degree of balance and grace, with the Divine and my Humanity, or the Universal and the Personal. The partners are my soul and my personality.

My personality is the visible part of me that drives around the Vineyard, works with clients, eats, sleeps and so forth. My soul is the invisible part of me that belongs to the Great Mystery; that knows it is profoundly and perfectly connected to every being and every thing in the Universe. The soul does not live in the personality. The personality lives in the soul.

It became a dance when I saw that there wasn't anything stationary or permanent I could hold onto. The very fabric of life was change, with constant comings and goings, losses and gains, births and deaths, beginnings and endings. I saw that the colors in the fabric were always both light and dark, pleasure and pain, sorrow and joy, health and disease. Not good or bad. Just positive and negative, like the poles of batteries. It takes both to turn on the light. The choice, then, was to learn to dance with it all, to embrace "the whole catastrophe," as Zorba says.

A writer and psychotherapist practicing in Martha's Vineyard, MA, Sheila Morgan is working on a book about feelings.

While I know there is nothing to hang onto, nothing to nail down, I also know that every ordinary day I am surrounded by the sacred; that dazzling perfection lies just beyond my to-do list. Yet so many days I cannot see it.

What I've noticed is that no matter how hard I try, I cannot summon the light at will. But, if I do my part, if I prepare myself for its arrival, every now and then, as if by magic, some kind of glorious light shines through the trivia of my daily dramas. So I prepare myself.

I put myself on my meditation cushion, to quiet my cluttered mind, which chatters incessantly like a run-away radio, so I can see more clearly what is true. The breath is always true, so I just sit and focus on my breath. It's very simple, but it is not easy. For a high-drama queen like me, who would rather cut off her head than sit still, it has been a long and arduous battle to learn simply to be quiet.

The Persian poet, Rumi, convinces me of the need for this:

The mystery does not get clearer by repeating the question,
nor is it bought with going to amazing places.

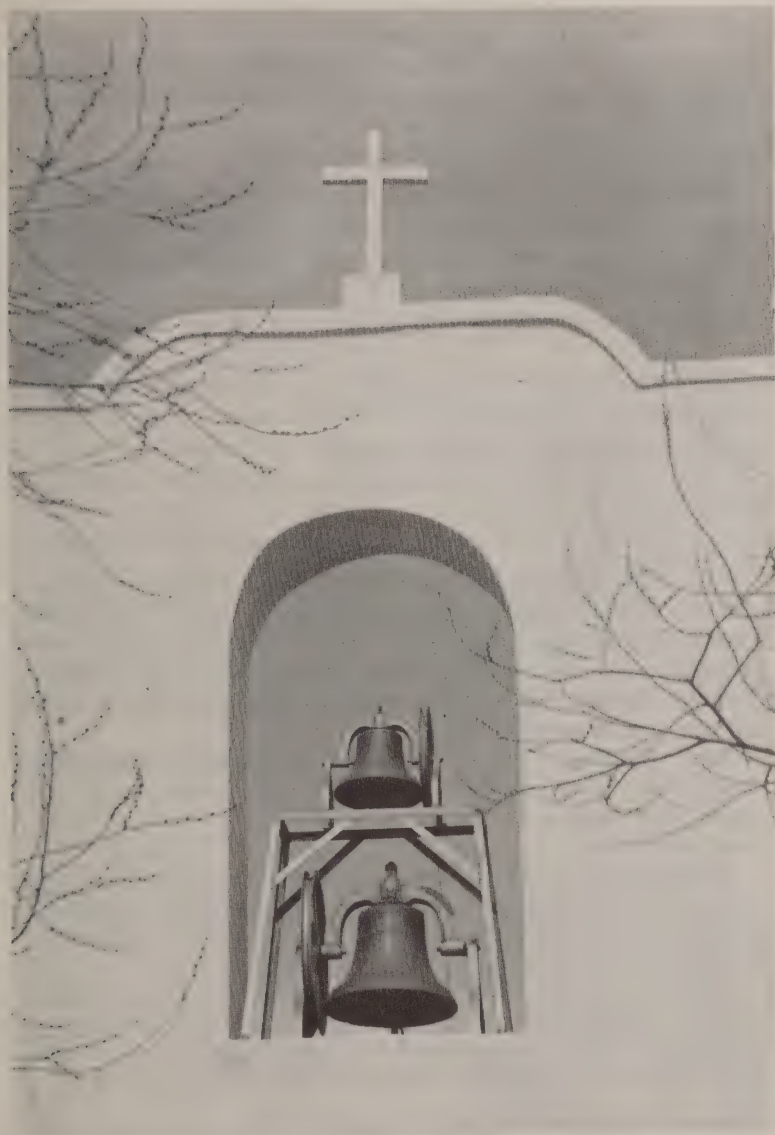
Until you've kept your eyes
and wanting still for fifty years,
you don't begin to cross over from confusion.

Meditation offers me the quiet to cross over from the confusion of my daily life, to a deeper place where I remember, for the zillionth time, that I am not separate and alone, but part of the vast and timeless Mystery.

The Greek word "zero" means to see Absolutely. When you see anything "true and clear" you are at zero. If I quiet down enough, sometimes I arrive at "zero."

The place where The Universal and the Personal, the Soul and the Personality come together is in the present moment. I have known for years—in fact I know for SURE—that the past is gone, the future hasn't arrived yet and the present really *is* all that I can fully experience. And *still* I seldom fully experience it. So I practice being here now.

There's a TV screen (called a mind), in my head that has on it a dial (call awareness). I can turn the dial to the channel (called thoughts), of my choice. I can turn it to memory—and get pictures and sounds on the screen about yesterday. Or to plans—and get pictures and sounds about tomorrow. Or to fantasies and get pictures and sound across time and space. Or I can turn it to NOW and get myself.



I practice turning the dial (my awareness), to now, which tends to tune out the thoughts (feels just like tuning out the commercials). Then I surrender to whatever the present moment brings and pay close attention. Some call this mindfulness.

The more I practice mindfulness, the more I awaken to a deeper truth of the world around me, to a richer, wilder truth of my senses. And when I really feel a touch, hear the music, or see the flowers, I am knee-deep in the Divine. (I often keep a magnifying glass beside a vase of flowers so my eyes can feast on the sublime.)

The present moment is the *only* moment in which the Mystery can be felt.

The flip side of surrendering to what is, is letting go of what isn't. Letting go of having it the way you want it requires lots of practice. In the midst of suffering it takes a heroic effort.

The following is part of a letter I wrote to a friend in the midst of his suffering from Aids:

Peter dear,

I've had a cold for at least five days, but it was only yesterday that I surrendered to it. Up until then my ego had other plans, so I kept pushing. Yesterday I just let go. I simply surrendered to what my life had to offer. It offered, along with an exhausted body, an almost unbearable loneliness. I just sat there accepting what was, letting go of having it my way. By the end of the day, strangely, I was filled with peace.

Filled with grace, I felt my heart soften as it hadn't been able to for weeks. I have been trying so hard "to get into spirit," playing music, reading my holy books, and had forgotten the obvious: surrender to what is, let go of what isn't.

I got to thinking about you and how you have had to surrender again, and again, and yet again. A thousand times a day you surrender to the way it is. A thousand dreams you've let go of in order to do that. How excruciatingly hard that must be.

I wanted to remind you of what an immense job you are doing for the rest of us. Each time you let go and surrender, each time you give up a piece of your ego, you make room for the light. And as you fill with light, you bring just that much more to the planet. We are all in your debt.

There are lots of useful things to let go of. Things like yesterday, like old resentments, outworn conversations, and faded fantasies. How about tightness in the body? And the to-do list? How much would we have to trust the Universe to let go of the fear of letting go?

The power of love is extraordinary, and it begins in the human heart and can travel to infinity. So I practice opening my heart, so that I can see the Divine in others. So that I can see beyond the package—which is all the stuff they're doing that's not to my liking—to the gift inside the package, the essence, the beauty buried under the fear—theirs or mine.

For however unacceptable the package, there's always a Holy Miracle inside: inside the surly teenager sitting coldly across from me at dinner is a confused little boy yearning to become someone he's not, and too afraid to risk being who he is. Inside the angry mother yelling at her crying child in the supermarket is an overwhelmed woman, herself a crying child, bone-tired and bone-lonely.

My heart, no stranger to suffering, can easily cross the bridge to another suffering heart, when I get my judgments out of the way.

There are “hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground” as Rumi says. We each have our own. These are some of my ways to prepare myself for the Divine: I quiet the mind, and I practice—being present, accepting what is, letting go of what isn't and opening my heart.

With all this practice, you'd think I'd be pretty good at it by now, wouldn't you? But I'm not. I still forget who I am. I forget who you are, and that you and I are one and the same. I forget to look at the pale pink light of dawn on the lagoon. Instead, I behave like some crazy sleep-walker slogging around in the fog, looking for the very light I'm bathed in.

So I return to practice.

Rock Ritual XIII

ROBERT O'ROURKE

Beside a country road the rocks had lost their luster.
Rocks, once alive with color, radiant, splashed by
the sun, dead now; crusted over with sticky,
black ooze . . .

A minuscule oil spill—
one hundred sixty fluid ounces from
five empty, plastic bottles labeled:
“DON'T POLLUTE” marked the spot where
someone thoughtlessly changed the oil
in their truck.

Now the rocks and grass were dead.
A spider caught in the excretion—lifeless.
All living things avoided the stagnant glob. . .
tiny ants scurried around the place,
butterflies no longer paused where once they
had warmed their wings,
deer tracks detoured close by.

I thought of other rocks splashed by sun and sea,
other calamities:
Alaska——Persian Gulf
Shetland Islands——North Sea
where sea otters played;
cormorants skimmed the waves;
whales surfaced in a swirl-of-blue.

Happy-living-sparkling places, once-upon-a-time!

“The rocks are alive,” proclaimed Black Elk. *Mitakuye oyasin!* Don't you understand we are all related? Rocks, trees, insects, animals. Everything infused with the sacred. Long before the old Sioux observed the nature-

Folk art carver, writer, poet, Bob O'Rourke makes his home close to nature in Colorado. Lisa Smith, whose illustration accompanies this article, is Director of the Squash Blossom Art Gallery in Aspen, CO.

of-things, Saint Bernard had declared, "Trees and STONES will teach you more than you can acquire from the mouth of a *magister*. What I know of the divine sciences and Holy Scripture, I learned in the woods and fields."

Today,
beside a country road
a rock, blackened by sludge,
spoke to me,
was my teacher!

Lisa Smith



Autumn Is for Seeing

EUGENE F. CONNOLLY

A “beautiful man in his seventies” brings rainbows into a hospital waiting room.

Autumn came to New England this year like a rainbow exploding and for weeks left every tree and bush hanging with gold and crimson fragments. If I were younger, I could easily believe that some great, jovial giant obsessed with beauty had romped through the mountains and the valleys, and along the meadows, lakes, and river banks, splashing with great dollops of yellow and orange every leafy thing that struck his fancy—and adding a touch of scarlet to those he liked best. These glorious October days in Massachusetts one can almost hear nature shouting from the crisp blue sky, “If you missed me in the summer and the spring, look at me now! See me! Rejoice! And remember!”

Flannery O'Connor once wrote that if people have trouble hearing, we shout to them, and if they have trouble seeing, we write in large, bold strokes they cannot miss. I think that God often acts that way with us. Perhaps especially as we grow older. As we reach our autumns. Our fuller years may well be a special time for God to explode rainbows in our hearts and in our minds. A time to make the divine presence so clear to us that all we can do is catch our breath and try to hold onto the moment.

What I think was my first experience of this occurred three summers ago while I was waist deep in a creek in Vermont. My wife, her sister and husband and I had been exploring the countryside on a getaway weekend. Eventually exhausted by the blistering heat, we began to look for any water we could submerge in. A storekeeper directed us to a “secret swimming hole” in a nameless creek that ran through rocky woodland at the edge of the village. We joined a dozen local families there, enjoying the cold clear water that rippled and pooled in the shade of fir and maple trees.

A resident of Danvers, MA, Dr. Eugene F. Connolly teaches English at Northern Essex Community College. During a recent sabbatical leave, he devoted himself to writing about teaching and about spirituality.

At one point I moved downstream twenty yards or so and stood looking back. The water flowed coolly against me. I could see trees growing from ledges of rock: gurgling newborns and splashing, spring-legged toddlers rejoicing in the first of their days: mothers holding and cuddling, warning and encouraging them in their summer joy. Teen-aged boys in cut-off pants cannonballed from ledges into the deepest pool as their fathers and grandfathers must have done before them. A handful of older men and women watched from webbed summer chairs on the sand. And there was my family, three with whom I knew the mystery of love, sitting cool and refreshed in the shallow water near the creek's edge, smiling, talking, laughing: a cherished triangle of easy intimacy.

And high above them all, broken into jagged pieces by stilled maple leaves and branches, blazed the afternoon sun, warming and feeding with life all I saw and was.

Nothing there was new to me, yet in that quick moment I was overwhelmed. Paradoxically, I knew that I was SEEING it all for the first time, this incredible blending of these incredible complexities, and the words that spring into my consciousness and kept repeating themselves in my brain were, "Everything is a miracle! Everything is a miracle! Everything is a miracle!" I felt that very lovingly I was being shown something that it was very important for me to see and that I was not looking at it alone.

With a heart that felt warm and light and new, I sloshed back up the creek and rejoined Sally, Jan, and Fred in the shallow water at its bank. I didn't tell them what had happened to me. But they had never looked more beautiful to me than they did then. Nor, perhaps, had I.

One raw, drenching morning recently, I drove to a large Boston hospital for tests. The city was awash and the rain-pounded traffic rippled into it bumper to bumper. Faces were expressionless. Their owners seemed disgusted but resigned, inured perhaps to the vagaries of the urban commute.

I moved quickly through my first appointment, but stopped dead in my tracks one step inside the massive waiting room of the second. Thirty crumpled, soggy, sullen people of every age and station sat in facing rows staring at the ceiling or the floor amid fallen newspapers, plastic kerchiefs, and umbrellas. The room was silent with concern, frustration, and impersonality. Reluctantly I joined them, alone with the other alones. For five minutes. That is, until He came in.



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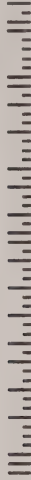
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If you would like to exchange letters with other *Fellowship in Prayer* readers, or be part of a prayer group in your area, send us your name and address, and we will list it in our next issue.

(PRINT CLEARLY)

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- ☐ I would like to exchange letters with other *Fellowship in Prayer* readers.
- ☐ I would like to join a prayer group and would appreciate hearing from groups in my area.
- ☐ Our prayer group welcomes new members. If interested, please call me.
- ☐ I would like to help organize a prayer group in my area and to hear from others interested in joining.
- ☐ I would like ____ copies of *The Way of Prayer* (at \$2 per copy).

Mari Kane



I thought I was looking at a thinner version of the old comedian, Ed Wynn, complete with horn-rimmed glasses, cane, and Cossack hat. He stepped with slow, gingerly determination, rocking gently from side to side as though small poorly fitted springs were attached to the bottoms of his thick-soled, ankle-high shoes. His black hair seemed dyed and his clothes gave me the vague sense of a stylish man of another time who that day had reached far back into a wardrobe of dimly remembered elegance. I wondered what affliction or collection of afflictions had brought him here. Then he sat down across from me beside an old woman wearing a hearing aid and propped in a wheelchair. Off came the Cossack hat and the outer jacket, revealing a tag pinned to the lapel of his sport coat, which read, VOLUNTEER. Suddenly I was looking at and being charmed by the most gracious of men.

He must have known the woman from another time, for immediately his narrow face broke into as wide a grin as it could contain. He leaned over, took her right hand in his, and suddenly the room was filled with his rich, deep, resonant voice joshing and cajoling her with perfectly sculpted diction. I was looking now full-faced in unabashed delight at the two.

"But how did you ever get here today," she asked.

"Well," the beautiful, lilting voice said through the smile, "I took the T to the North Station and then I took a bus to the hospital. That's all." As though neither of them recognized the long years that had brought him to that day or knew the cane, the glasses, and the spring-loaded shoes.

"But, the rain," she said.

"Oh, that's no problem for me. I just walk between the drops. You know how I am when I make up my mind to do something."

She shook her head as if to say, "What can I do with a man like you?"

His voice lowered as he talked to her about her concerns, soothing, assuring, confident, her hand held tightly in his. With his bright, crinkly eyes locked into hers, he listened, and he talked, and he listened. I looked away and the voice continued, strengthening her with his strength, buoying her with his buoyancy, comforting her with the authority of a Julian of Norwich, who, after her vision of Christ was able to say, "All shall be well, All shall be well. All manner of things shall be well."

I was aware again of the others in the room. My eyes drifted among them from the elegantly grey-suited businessman to the bald boy with

the great lump rising from the center of his skull; to the powerfully built man in his seventies with the beautiful head of slick, salted hair; to each of the other men, women, and children there of color, culture and accent like and unlike my own.

And then, as though a key controlling a computer screen had been pushed, they were all transformed before my eyes. They were no longer strangers. They were mine. They were my brothers and sisters. We were all God's wounded, and they all belonged to me and to God and to one another. All our differences were accidental; our essences were the same: God's journeying children, brothers and sisters who had not met and for all kinds of foolish reasons, perhaps, were afraid to look into one another's eyes and speak.

I felt suddenly free and intimate, with the intimacy of a loving brother in the presence of beloved siblings. I wanted to go to all of them, to lift up their chins, to look into their eyes, to tell them what I knew now; who we really are and what that means for now and for our lives—. But I didn't. The moment passed, and I simply sat there, warmly full of them. They remained the same: solitary and silent. They had not seen and heard the volunteer as I had that morning, so the depth that had been touched in me had not been touched in them and there was no way I could share him with them.

Then as suddenly as he had appeared, my Ed Wynn was passing before me. When he got to the corridor, he stopped, tilted his head back looking for signs above the doors, touched the tip of his cane to the carpeted floor, pushed off into his springy little waddle, and this beautiful man was gone—off into somebody else's life.

I haven't thought until now of the tests I had done that day, but I haven't stopped thinking about the volunteer and all the people he brought to me that day in the hospital waiting room.

St. Ignatius Loyola never ceased urging his followers to "see God in all things." In 1540, in approving Ignatius' plans for the formation of the Society of Jesus, Pope Paul III said, "The finger of God is here." Ignatius was telling his Jesuits and all of us to see the rainbows exploding all around us and in us all the days of our lives. Some days, like so many other people, I think I do. Those, especially, are days when my pace is slowed. My eyes are clear, and I feel that my heart is God's.

Clark's Pond

In our middle years, with the fall
closing behind us like a philosophy
conclusive in the logic of its leaves,
I hold your mittened hand
until we stand
two woolened figures by a gloomy lake.

Twilight cannot dispose of us;
night obscures our image in the water
but we reappear as stars to twinkle time
out of significance.
May we dance
always with harmonious pulse and flesh.

Beyond looms the toppled oak
where the veery nested when the ditch was loud
with brook talk and we laughed the woods to color
until the grass snakes fled
and pain, the plodder,
forgotten in our comity of health.

Fall days are short, fall woods are dark;
lives little better. Autumnal stillness swells this flute
to diapason: love's substance and sweet deceit
exalt our nights to grandeur.
All endure
what is because Is is and Love much more.

Herbert A. Kenny

The author of numerous books of poetry and prose, Herbert A. Kenny was for many years the book editor of The Boston Globe.

Carpet Sale

We spoke of India
with an old man
who had flown there twice,
our conversation absorbed
by numerous oriental rugs
beneath our feet.
Said he wouldn't go back—
the water was terrible,
their rituals wild without reason,
and besides, the carpets
could be sent by ship cheaper now

The most simple design
was The Family Prayer: \$1,019.00
Thin, seven-year-old hands
cramped,
weaving black and blue with fervor.
Back ache and hunger swelling.
Eight months,
\$1.35
for a twelve hour day.

And he tells us
to walk right on them.

Corrine DeWinter

Corrine DeWinter is a poet residing in Springfield, MA.

Surrender

October again—and summer's thick
 foliage thinned, I awake
 to the awe of crystals in my window
 letting in a sunburst of blue and rose
 and yellow stars, circles of white
 light and pieces of rainbow scattered
 on walls and ceiling, even
 on drawn draperies
 in my small room.

No mortared brick or hammered board
 can shut out the universe when
 waiting crystals in my window
 surrender to sun.

Emily Sargent Councilman

Gift of A Name

The two who gave him life
 conceived a name,
 A new name—
 no one, no friend or family
 had worn.
 They tried out dozens,
 threw them all away,
 reserving—treasuring this one.
 Proudly they handed it to him
 when he was born.

But—
 That hectic holy crisis
 that is birth
 reversed the process.
 A helpless tiny miracle
 of child, baptized
 then with the most exalted
 names on earth.

Father—Mother!
 They received—each one
 the gift presented
 by their newborn son.

Anita Wheatcroft

A widely published poet and former trustee of Fellowship in Prayer, Emily Sargent Councilman makes her home in Burlington, NC.

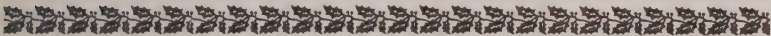
A writer and poet in Texas, Anita Wheatcroft is a regular contributor to Fellowship in Prayer.

*This Holiday Season
Give the Gift of
“Wisdom, Love, Goodness, and Joy.”*

Those gifts come in each issue of *Fellowship in Prayer*, writes Tod Broderick, of Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Many of our readers feel the same way. That's why we suggest *Fellowship in Prayer* as a most thoughtful and loving gift to friends, family, and loved ones in celebration of the holy season that will soon be with us.

Just print their names and addresses and send the list, along with your check, (\$16 per subscription/\$22 outside USA) in the envelope inserted in the middle of this issue. A gift card will be sent announcing your gift of *Fellowship in Prayer*, which will begin with the February issue.



Ask Angela

BARBARA ACKERMAN

Do you have a question of the heart or spirit that needs attention? Angela, our canine sage-in-residence, would love to help. Please write to her in care of FiP, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542, and she will give you her answer in our next issue.



Dear Angela,

Could you please share with us your thoughts concerning families and family life? Thank you.

Sincerely,
Concerned Family Member

Dear Concerned,

Thank you very much for your question. Family life is an issue of great concern to all of us. It feels so weighty to me that I'm left wondering whether this twelve-pound mutt can handle it. One the other paw, I love digging. Perhaps I'll just pretend that this question is actually a little clump of petunias I'm getting into here . . .

From what I've learned from my decade-plus as a canine member of one, families serve many functions. When we're small, our families are the world. Until we've dug our way out of the backyard and run around the block twice, our families seem to be all there is. Families feed us, bathe us, brush us, give us flea dips, clip our nails, check our ears, take us for shots, call us for dinner, pat our heads, and try to set guidelines for acceptable behavior. Families help contribute to our values, beliefs, hopes, longings, and fears. In families, you might say we're all flowers growing in gardens with varying amounts of—and need for—sun, shade, water, space and attention. In short, our families make us or break us.

As most of my friends and fans know from earlier columns, I am not the textbook example of the great American family dog. I am not really the expert to ask about creating happier family relations. It is unlikely that there will be an "Angela Method" for getting on well in a family or an "Angela Work-out Plan" for being a more charming contributor to family life. The expert who really *could* be writing this column is my for-

mer companion Captain, who *was* the great American family dog. Every so often, Cappy would escape the backyard and innocently cruise the neighborhood for cute pups. He always came back a couple of hours later. One year, he did steal all the Christmas candy, but he did give it back, albeit in a slightly reconstituted form . . . Cappy never caused anyone a lick of trouble. Our family loved Cappy and me for ourselves, for our differences. There was space for us both. Cappy was loved for his goodness and I am loved for my not-so-goodness.

I began life as a shelter puppy and was mistrustful of humans, other dogs, children, and my own shadow. Despite my high-strung ways and unfriendly demeanor, I managed to squiggle my way into the hearts of an adoptive family because of my pretty puppy face. Due to the acceptance, affection, and loyalty my family has shown me over the years, I have gone from a whirling, twirling dervish to a twirling guru with a part-time job as a columnist. I attribute my success to my family. Even

It is still possible to get some—if not most—of the familying we need to heal.

from our earliest days together, my family sought to find a way to love and soothe me. The discovery of the chest-rub as a therapeutic tool was transforming. When my chest was rubbed, I became calmer, gentler, less agitated, and less fretful. The chest-rub was a power tool my family used to soothe their cute little savage beast.

With my beloveds I discovered I was free to be all that I dared to be despite the twists, turns, and quirks of my nature. Through the love, support, and space given me, I have been able to be the exasperating, incorrigible, but beguiling mutt I was meant to be.

When we are acknowledged, honored, and appreciated for being ourselves, we are able to flourish and thrive.

Despite the fact that I do not bring slippers or the evening paper, my family always makes room for me at one end of the couch. I have a pillow in the kitchen for chicken watch and blankets in several strategic locations. Although I often dig my way out of the backyard trampling the flowers and terrorizing neighborhood children with my barking, my beloveds have always let me back in, usually through the front door. Despite the fact that I do not come when called, I still sleep at the foot of

the bed of my best, best beloved. Although I chew the mail, my family always shares their table scraps with me.

I do make some positive contributions to family life. I do make myself available for head-pats and chest-rubs. I will often sit in front of a beloved and gaze longingly up at them, or grin at them at times. I provide an early-warning system of approaching friends and enemies. I do follow beloveds from room to room providing one of those rooms is the kitchen. When family members return home from an outing, I provide them with a hero's and heroine's welcome. I am a brass band of barking and tail-wagging. My family says I am a "good greeter." I am also a decent comforter and consoler. I am very sympathetic and attentive to any humans I love who feel to me to be down in the dumps. I tune into mood changes and try to be as supportive as I can. I offer beloveds one paw and get rid of any tears dribbling down. I am also a respectable thunder-storm-sharer providing the other soul sharing the storm is scared out of their wits like I am. No one should have to shake, shiver, and moan all alone during thunder. I share these storms best when I am held securely against the body of a beloved. This makes the storm just as scary, but definitely less lonely.



Amanda K. Breese

Believe me. I know I am a lucky dog and a happy statistic. I know there are souls out there less fortunate than I. There are souls who have never been allowed a corner of the couch, who have not been cherished as I have been.

Even if we have no family at all, or our family has failed to see that we thrive, it is *still* possible to get some—if not most—of the familying we need to heal.

Despite my own excellent family situation, one day I decided that I wanted and needed more family. I chose my buddy Barbara. We amalgamated. At the level of heart and spirit we are family. NO FUSS. NO MUSS.

There is one other way to create a spirit family if you need one. You can use the Captain Method of Re-Familying yourself, which I share with you now.

Captain was seen for a number of days cruising the schoolyard where one of my beloveds went to school. Several students even attempted to lure him home with them. Cappy made careful observations, scientific sniffings, and took astute notes on the situation. In short, Cappy cased the place. One afternoon, he followed *my* best beloved home. Many calls were made to find his family. No one ever claimed him. Cappy slipped right into our lives. To sum up, Cappy sniffed, followed his nose where it led him, then wagged his way into another group of hearts, a family of his own choosing.

Whether one is a cute little incorrigible like me or a blessing like Cappy, know that you need not suffer from lack of family. Find a soul who values *your* soul, follow them home, then make them your own.

Faithfully,
Angela

Open the Door, Please!

EVELYN KENNEDY

Please send the story of your own "transforming experience" to the Editor, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542. You need not be a professional writer.

"Knock and it shall be opened," says an often quoted bible passage. Do you sometimes find yourself knocking and pounding at the door only to be met with a seemingly impenetrable barrier?

Many times throughout my life I found myself pounding on doors that refused to open. Discouragement and frustration would find me staring for long periods of time at a solid barrier. I sought various techniques to gain entrance to an unyielding door, but what could I do? Where could I go? Whom could I ask for help? How could I find a faith strong enough to turn the handle on the locked door?

Little by little I learned that when we have difficulty with a problem, we have to turn to that Higher Power that moves mountains. As Ralph Waldo Emerson stated, "We need to get our bloated nothingness out of the way." And that is very, very difficult.

There was a time when I did turn to the Higher Power - and with wonderful results. After 30 years of marriage I found myself, along with three of my German shepherds "out on the street" with no money and a very meager income. It was a time when I felt totally abandoned, pulled into an abyss of total despair. The closed door represented loneliness and lack. It was a frightening time, yet somehow I knew it was time for me to master the locked door. Ernest Holmes, founder of Religious Science said, "There is a power for good in the Universe and you can use it." I believed those words and was ready to act. I sought a realtor to find me and my three German shepherds an affordable house. (Rentals were out of the question with three large dogs.) The only money I had was \$500 loaned to me by a friend to use as a down payment! The "perfect" house for me and my pets was found; I signed a note for \$7000 to be paid to the seller in one year's time. Can you imagine the courage it took to sign

Evelyn Kennedy, R.Sc.F. is a minister and currently resides in Port Hueneme, CA.



that note, because at the time there was no way in sight for me to come up with that \$7000 in such a short period of time.

Now my faith had to be focused on an open door with the “green stuff” in my hands ready to place in the hands of the owner. Mental work was required—no longer could I see a closed door.

My faith was unwavering, and money began to trickle in. People who had owed money on puppies purchased in the past suddenly paid; money came from the government; a friend repaid me for help once given. The last money I needed to complete the sum of \$7000 appeared two days before the due date! And there was more: a perfect job with a future—but that’s another story!

I now know that when one reaches out in total faith and trust to the Power of Love, that Cosmic Door will swing open, and one will look out that open door, as I did, on a panorama of beauty and a world of miracles—miracles of healing, abundance and happiness!

How to Cope With Prayer Block

FRANCES SHERIDAN GOULART

It was once said of a bishop, "He is so heavenly-minded he is of no earthly use." I suspect that the well-polished prayer life is likelier to produce the opposite. But it is not easily come by. Sad to confess, my devotional life (and perhaps yours) hits the shoals with a frustrating frequency. My prayer pauses, in other words, give me pause.

Not that I am not in good company. "Even the saints had their dark hours, days, and weeks. They say then that 'God has left them' in order that they may know truly how utterly wretched they are of themselves, without his support," says Tito Colliander in his book, *Way of the Ascetics*.

But let's face it, time spent *not* at prayer seems like time spent away from God. And a prayer block, I realized as a writer, can be just as frustrating as *writer's block*, leading to spiritual loss just as lost work time leads to loss of income.

The wish to pray is a prayer in itself.

But, I reasoned, if I could solve one, perhaps I could remedy the other by applying essentially the same techniques. Which I offer herewith to others who find themselves experiencing "Prayer's Block."

1. *Change time for prayer.* If your devotional daily dozen (or duo) no longer inspires, try (a) saying your morning prayer in the evening and vice versa; or drop both for a week and try (b) doing all your meditating at noon instead. Many traditional devotions never get said by anyone outside a religious order these days. (c) Take three prayer breaks at meal-times by lengthening each *grace*. Let your gratitude for God's taking care of this need lead you to thanksgiving for all the other needs God satisfies daily which you take for granted. (d) Write a daily letter to God as a switch from conventional prayer periods. At the end of each month, review your spiritual scrapbook.

A writer and book reviewer in Weston, CT, Frances Sheriden Goulart works with the Inter-community Center for Justice and Peace in New York City. The center is an interfaith, human rights organization.



2. *Join others in prayer.* Praying in community at church was easy enough for me, but prayerfulness often faded when I left the pew and peers behind. Rx? Committing myself to a prayer fellowship. Many churches have prayer chains whose members pause to pray daily for the needs of others. Often larger causes, such as work for peace and justice, are included as well. To reinforce the commitment, fellowships such as Partners in Prayer, the Order of the Thousandfold, or Daughters of the King have specific prayers to be offered up at an appointed time each day. (See addresses below.)

3. *Change churches.* Worshipping with another congregation—or with another denominational community or another religion—for a week or two can promote a new spiritual bonding with God, whom you will meet from a fresh new perspective. As a bonus, you may come away with an “Our Father” or “Hail Mary” alternative to enrich your prayer’s vocabulary.

4. *Write a prayer rule.* Deriving satisfaction from any regular pursuit—prayer included—is helped I found by setting a goal. Once a month ask yourself: What am I trying to accomplish this month through prayer? What do I especially need to thank God for? What aspect of the Almighty would I like to become more intimate with, and what prayers are likely to help? The answers to such cross examination should suggest the prayer forms most helpful in achieving your goal.

5. *Pray to God’s friends and relatives.* Making friends with God’s chosen ones by reading the lives of the great spiritual leaders, martyrs, saints and angels not only makes great prayer-block-busting reading at bedtime but is a good way to get back into God’s grace through prayer. Such holier-than-us role models also were authors of some of the greatest prayers ever uttered or recorded. For inspiration, look through Duane W. H. Arnold’s *Prayers of the Martyrs* (Zondervan Publishing, 1991) or Leonard Foley’s *Saint of the Day*.

6. *Pray with a friend.* Another tactic to give yourself a prayerful push in the right direction is to cultivate a prayer buddy, spouse or family member. Plan to meet at your local place of worship before and/or after work. I found that concern over standing up a friend always got me to the church on time, guaranteeing my meeting with God. To keep motivated, take turns choosing the prayer you will use for each get-together;

or you can pray your way through an anthology of devotions you both admire.

But perhaps the simplest solution of all when one ceases to “pray without ceasing” is suggested by Hubert van Zeller in his book, *With Our Eyes Open* (1949): “If you have nothing to say, say so.” And the most comforting thought by Georges Bernanos in his *Diary of a Country Priest* (1937): “The wish to pray is a prayer in itself.”

For further inspiration, try *When the Well Runs Dry* by Thomas H. Green, Notre Dame, Indiana, Ave Maria, 1979; *Way of the Ascetics: The Ancient Tradition of Discipline and Inner Growth* by Tito Colliander, Crestwood, New York, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985; *Dark Night of the Soul* by Saint John of the Cross, New York, New York, Doubleday, 1959.

Addresses:

Partners in Prayer
1113 Robinson Street
Orlando, FL 32801

Daughters of the King
4263 First Avenue
Tucker, GA 30084

Order of the Thousandfold
Box 323
Graniteville, SC 29829

Autobiography of a Chosen One

ROBERT GRANAT

Here is the best case for human uniqueness that we have ever heard!

The Jews have been called the Chosen People. This call is correct. The Jews are indeed chosen. And so is everybody else.

Everybody, needless to say, includes me. And you too. Here is chapter one of my and our autobiography . . .

My life, come to look at it, appears rather ordinary. Which is to say, utterly extraordinary. It began—perhaps—with my conception. The facts and figures of that are also ordinary. Which is to say, utterly beyond conception . . .

In the fathomless black of the shoreless sea floated the galactic clusters of 1,000,000,000 plus of them, wheeling and drifting like clouds of luminous plankton. Of these 1,000,000,000 galaxies, one was our galaxy, which we understandably called *The Galaxy*, the Milky Way. Within it the 100,000,000,000 plus suns that moleculed its milk lived out their slow and violent deaths. Of those 100,000,000,000 plus suns in our particular galaxy, one, a smallish fireball 260 million billion kilometers or so out from the hub, was our sun, which we understandably called *The Sun*. About these countless suns, even-less-countable lumps of matter, earths, hung and spun in the frigid black. Of these earths, 9 twirled and whirled around The Sun, and of the 9 only 1 was fit, chemically and thermally, to be a birth planet—ours. Which, understandably, we call *The Earth*. It was to The Earth that my life came for its existence.

The place was seething with life already, of course, when still another entity—mine—plinked down and blinked on in their midst. To locate it now will not be easy. First, we'll have to push aside the vast majority of existences, the flora, since I was not destined to be a bacterium, a fungus, a vegetable or a tree. The remaining minority, the fauna, still defies numeration, so we must push aside the vast majority of them too, the protozoan hordes, the protoplasmic swarms. Now, down to the insects, we can finally begin to count—species, not individuals. Away with them too, all 700,000 varieties. The minute fraction that remains, embracing every creature from sardines to my aunts and uncles, continues to mock computation. But my species, self-dubbed Human the Knowing, was

more or less countable. When I joined Human the Knowing, three, four or five billion specimens were here already.

3,000,000,000 to 5,000,000,000 human beings, of which 2 were my parents. Of these 3 to 5 billion, roughly half were males and the other half females. Roughly and conservatively, this made for something like 4,000,000,000,000,000,000 possible pairings. But of these 4 billion billion possible pairings, 1 and 1 alone were able to conceive me. Despite such inconceivable odds, however, that particular male and that particular female did somehow happen to run into each other in that global crowd, did happen to find one another attractive, and did become mates.

Which hardly guaranteed my existence either. Far from it. Because, packed in her ovarian chambers, my mother carried 140,000 eggs. Lost somewhere among the 140,000 eggs was the 1 that was mine. And of these 140,000 eggs, 139,600—99.0028%—would never even get the chance to be fertilized. Only three or four hundred would, at the rate of 1 egg per month over a stretch of thirty of thirty-five years. And 98 or 99% of these would die and be flushed away. And yet in my case it did happen. One of those lucky eggs was my egg. For a few hours, its now-or-never opportunity finally arrived. And yes, as it waited there alone in the dark fallopian silence, the critical tryst took place. It was come upon, ravished, transfigured and transcended.

But it wasn't that simple either. Because this egg was only my egg. It wasn't me, just half of me. The second half was a certain spermatozoon.



Cliff Moore

And if my egg was 1 among hundred of thousands, my sperm was 1 among billions of billions—that means 18 zeros. These billion billions were produced steadily in my father's body over many years, to be released on hundreds of occasions at the rate of 250,000,000 or so per occasion. Yet still again it happened. My sperm's moment to do or die turned out to be precisely the same do-or-die moment for my egg. Just as my egg found herself ready, willing and able my sperm found himself ready, willing and able, lusty and raring to go.

And go it did, lost in a chaotic marathon of 250,000,000 thrashing contenders. This fearsome mob were all racing for one single egg, my egg, waiting in the silence of her solitude. And then for one final time it happened. Which of that frenzied quarter billion was the first to reach her? *My* sperm, mine! Crazy as a kamikaze, it rammed into her head-on, destroying both of their existences and saving both of their lives. Instantly their nuclei coalesced, their chromosomal chains entwined and fused. My halves became my whole. My very first act as me was to man the chemical barricades against the furious battering of the also-rans.

Another human was being. The ranks of The Chosen grew by 1.

FIRE IN THE SOUL: A NEW PSYCHOLOGY OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

by Joan Borysenko, Warner Books, New York, New York, 237 pages, hardback, \$19.95.

This is an alternate selection of the Book-of-the-Month Club. A highly respected and best-selling author, Dr. Borysenko co-founded the Mind/Body Clinic at New England Deaconess Hospital and was an instructor in medicine at Harvard Medical School.

Drawing on her own experiences with tragedy and illness, as well as on anecdotes from her therapy patients, the author combines scientific knowledge with wisdom and insight to show how the most devastating events can initiate a fruitful search for meaning; how wrestling with the demons of pain, conflict, and illness can lead us to discover our wholeness; and how meditation, prayer, and heightened awareness can serve as shining beacons during the proverbial "dark night of the soul."

Fire in the Soul provides a short list of organizations and publications Dr. Borysenko has found particularly helpful. She describes *Fellowship in Prayer* as "thoroughly and delightfully ecumenical," gives the contents of a representative issue and tells readers where to write us. PW

SACRED DIMENSIONS OF WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE

Edited by Elizabeth Dodson Gray, Roundtable Press, Wellesley, MA, 245 pages, paperback, \$15.95.

Some of the most creative writers in the growing literature about women's experience celebrate with warmth and intelligence the sacred stream that connects all women to one another and the earth. Breast-feeding lawyers, Afro-Brazilian women who live in slums, homemakers who have loved their husbands for many, many years are like one person as these authors explore "The Zen of Housework," "The Meaning of Eating," "Listening as the Language of Love," the spirituality in "A Woman's Path to Power" and many other universally feminine areas.

As to its ultimate message, this book is a hopeful reminder that "the truth will set you free." MFG

Fellowship in Prayer welcomes your comments. Please send them to The Editor, Fellowship in Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542.

I believe the title of a recent film might be a good description of your publication: "A River Runs Through It." Its contents hold such life-giving waters; pages from so many faith-filled people on this earth whose one Source is the Holy, the Strong, the Immortal God. May the prayer that Jesus prayed be ours: "That all may be one."

S. Vincentius Zimmer; Chicago, IL

I am a young woman, 25, writing from my village in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. Even though there is much scenic beauty here, there is also much hardship and depression. To say that I enjoy your little book is an understatement. Through its words, I can believe that despite all our shame, drudgery and broken dreams, there is still beauty in the world. In city or in country, peace must be found within oneself.

As William Carlos Williams wrote, "What can the little violets and heather teach you?"

Lisa Donovan Rudderhan; Ingonish Beach, Nova Scotia

Good morning, Partners in Prayer. Thank you for keeping me on your mailing list. I appreciate your kindness.

I have a friend who would like to receive your inspiring and enriching publication. She is on a fixed income and in need financially so will not be able to pay for her subscription.

Thank you in advance for the temporal and spiritual treasures that will be made available to her through your publication.

S. Mantina J. Flaherty; Ipswich, MA

I am collecting children's night prayers with the plan of compiling them into a book. I would like to represent as many faiths and ethnic groups as possible and am wondering if your readers would like to send me a favorite childhood bedtime prayer. If they know the prayer in its original language, they should send both the English and original language versions to Ethel Fraga, Box 924, Taunton, MA 02780. Thank you!

Ethel Fraga; Taunton, MA

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We welcome articles on prayer, meditation, spiritual experience, religious faith or practices, and similar topics. Preference is given to experiential manuscripts. Manuscripts should not exceed 1500 words, should be typed, double spaced, on 8 ½ by 11 inch paper, on a 5 ¼ inch floppy minidisk, 2S/2D, or 2S/HD, or on 3 ½ HD microdisks, in WordPerfect and sent to The Editor, Fellowship in Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542-3227. Please include a biography of no more than five lines.

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